

August 12, 2013

Sir Philip Craven, President,
Mr. Xavier Gonzalez, Chief Executive Officer
International Paralympic Committee
Adenauerallee 212-214
53113 Bonn
Germany

Dear President Craven & Mr. Gonzalez:

I would like to join New Hampshire's United States Senators Jeanne Shaheen and Kelly Ayotte in expressing dismay over the International Paralympic Committee's decision to rule Exeter, New Hampshire, native Victoria Arlen as ineligible to compete in the International Paralympic Committee World Swimming Championships in Montreal, Canada.

Though paralyzed from the waist down seven years ago, Victoria has demonstrated unsurpassed perseverance and determination in becoming a world-record-setting and gold-medal-winning Paralympic swimmer. Through her hard work and dedication in rising above adversity, Victoria has inspired many in the State of New Hampshire and throughout the country.

Denying Victoria the opportunity to compete in an event for which she has trained diligently, and at the last possible moment, is unconscionable and patently unfair. Victoria is precisely the type of athlete the International Paralympic Committee should be working to promote and support, a shining example that a world of opportunity exists for all those living with a disability.

Moreover, the basis for ruling Victoria ineligible – the possibility that she might one day be able to resume use of her legs – is nothing short of disgraceful, undermining the very values of courage, inspiration, determination and equality that the International Paralympic Committee aims to promote. Our goal must always be to foster the full and equal inclusion of all those who experience disabilities.

None of us knows what the future of medical science holds. Each day, new cures and treatments are being developed to address a wide range of conditions. There may come a day when paralysis is a thing of the past, and as a society we should aspire to achieve that goal, while ensuring that those who experience disabilities today are able to experience the high quality of life they deserve. To deny Victoria the opportunity to compete based on the hope of a future cure is to deny every Paralympian the ability to aspire to whatever goals and dreams they might choose.

As the mother of a son who experiences severe physical disabilities, including being unable to walk, I understand the importance of encouraging our society to fully include, accept and value every member of our communities as they are. I believe that ideal can be reached without discouraging the goals and aspirations of each individual.

I strongly encourage the International Paralympic Committee to revisit their misguided ruling and to reinstate Victoria Arlen so she may resume her record-breaking Paralympic career that has inspired so many.

With every good wish,

Margaret Wood Hassan
Governor of New Hampshire